

## Message Text

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ORIGIN EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 DRC-01 /090 R

DRAFTED BY EA/VN:RHWENZEL:JCM

APPROVED BY EA/VN:RHWENZEL

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R 162211Z APR 74

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY SAIGON

UNCLAS STATE 077222

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, MOPS, VS

SUBJECT: COMMUNIST ATTACK ON TONG LE CHAN

REFS: (A) SAIGON 4823; (B) STATE 07265.

1. FOLLOWS EXCERPTS FROM TRANSCRIPT OF DEPARTMENT  
SPOKESMAN'S PRESS BRIEFING APRIL 15:

QUOTE

Q JOHN, THERE HAS BEEN A LOT OF MILITARY ACTIVITY IN  
CAMBODIA AND IN VIET-NAM. HOW ARE YOUR EXPERTS READING  
THIS? IS THIS AN UPSURGE, OR HIGH POINT, OR WHAT?

A YES, THERE HAS BEEN CONSIDERABLE REPORTING OVER THE  
WEEKEND. THERE HAS BEEN SOME INCREASE IN FIGHTING  
RECENTLY, PARTICULARLY IN MILITARY REGION III, WHICH IS  
WHERE SAIGON IS LOCATED.

ONE ASPECT OF THE FIGHTING IS ESPECIALLY DISTURBING TO  
US, AND THAT HAS BEEN THE PRESSURE THAT HAS BEEN BROUGHT  
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AGAINST THE ARVN RANGER BASE AT TONG LE CHAN. THIS HAS

TAKEN THE FORM OF, ACCORDING TO WHAT I'M TOLD, GROUND  
ATTACKS AND HEAVY ARTILLERY BARRAGES WHICH FORCED  
EVACUATION OF THE BASE AND ITS SUBSEQUENT SEIZURE BY THE  
  
NORTH VIETNAMESE.

NOW, AS YOU KNOW, TONG LE CHAN HAS BEEN CONTINUOUSLY  
HELD BY THE ARVN FOR MANY YEARS BUT HAD BEEN UNDER  
CONTINUOUS SEIGE BY THE NORTH VIETNAMESE REALLY FOR OVER  
THE PAST YEAR. THE BASE, I GATHER, OF ITSELF IS NOT  
MILITARILY CRITICAL, BUT IT DID BLOCK AN IMPORTANT  
INFILTRATION ROUTE ALONG THE BORDER OF TAY NINH AND BINH  
LONG PROVINCES AND DID STAND IN THE WAY OF COMMUNIST  
EFFORTS TO EXPAND THEIR CONTROL OF THE AREA.

I GUESS ALL I CAN SAY BY WAY OF A JUDGMENT HERE IS  
THAT COMMUNIST ACTION AGAINST THE BASE CONSTITUTES ONE  
OF THE MOST FLAGRANT OF MANY NORTH VIETNAMESE VIOLATIONS  
OF THE CEASE-FIRE SINCE THE PEACE AGREEMENT WAS CONCLUDED.

Q JOHN, THERE ARE SOME INDICATIONS OR SOME REPORTS  
FROM SAIGON THAT THE GOVERNMENT MAY BE DRAWING A DARKER  
PICTURE THAN NECESSARY ON THE EVACUATION OF TONG LE CHAN  
IN ORDER, PRESUMABLY, TO GET MORE SUPPORT IN THE UNITED  
STATES FROM THE CONGRESS.

A I SAW THE REPORTS YOU ARE REFERRING TO, BUT THE ONLY  
INFORMATION I HAVE IS ROUGHLY WHAT I TOLD YOU, THAT THERE  
WAS THIS HEAVY PRESSURE BROUGHT TO BEAR BOTH BY COMBAT  
FORCES ON THE GROUND AND BY HEAVY ARTILLERY BARRAGES  
ON THE BASE WHICH FORCED THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE ARVN  
UNIT THERE. UNQUOTE.

2. LATTER QUESTION EVIDENTLY STEMS FROM JAMES MARKHAM  
STORY IN NEW YORK TIMES APRIL 15 WHICH SUMMARIZED IN EA  
PRESS ROUND-UP (PARA 6 REF B). KISSINGER

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